Racial bias puts three residents behind bars

Rajnii Eddins says he tried to find out why a Rainier Beach High School student was being handcuffed by Seattle police. Instead of an answer, he was charged with obstructing justice. His case is one of three the local NAACP says it wants investigated...see page 5.

“Their privilege makes them stupid.... I’m always appalled by the stupidity of the privileged.”

Sherman Alexie on white liberals

To read more...see page 7.
Aiko Schaefer, of Poverty Action, wonders why state legislators didn’t fight for longer payday lending

Out of Touch

By AIKO SCHAEFER, Poverty Action

A
s another legislative session is about to come to a close and pundits and politicians sit back to analyze quotes and votes, the very issues that were taken up by legislators in the state capitol speak to their values.

The Viaduct and transportation spend

The Viaduct and transportation spending, NASA, a new Sonics stadium, and a bevy of other issues were debated with varying results. The Legislature pasted one of the most extensive children’s healthcare programs in the country. They also supported the environment by passing a first-in-the-nation ban on PBBEs (a toxic flame retardant).

At the end of the day, children and a cleaner environment are pretty safe political plays. Children are some of our most vulnerable residents and should be protected. Toxic chemicals negatively impact our entire state’s quality of life. One might imagine that all issues with massive public support would see some action by the Legislature — right?

Payday lending reform enjoyed support from a large and growing coalition. Editorial boards across the state sup

port

cured ports on the practice, and the coalition advocating reform had a preferred bill in the House with 27 co-sponsors.

Unfortunately, the widely supported effort to rein in predatory payday lenders saw no action in the State Senate, and the House committee refused to allow a hearing on a bill that would provide direct relief to consumers.

Organizations and volunteers work tirelessly to endorse candidates and educate voters during the campaign season, long before legislators ever have a chance to influence their values on public policy.

What an interesting week it’s been! Real Change found itself at the center of a blogospheric event when I questioned the angle of a Seattle Weekly story on our turf policies on my own blog, www.apesmaslament.blogspot.com. The Weekly’s editor, Mike Seely, took the bait and feed back on our blog, calling my post a “singularly bizarre preemptive diatribe,” and promising a balanced article in the next day’s paper.

The story, which took up the issue of some vendors being perhaps too successful, saw many of the premises themselves built on public interest, although many found the premise itself rather small and mean. The vendors felt hurt by the story, although no one’s said it’s affecting their sales. The Real Change v. Seattle Weekly spat blew up online at Horse’s Ass, Crosscut, the Stranger’s Slog, and several others, including more buzz than any other story on Real Change I can recall.

What does another year of unfettered payday lending mean to working families in Washington?

Of all other small loan providers. That’s right, 35 percent interest and that is already on the books; unfortunately, payday lenders were given special privileges and don’t have to abide by it. Do you want to be even more shocked?

Last year a pro-business, Republican Congress and President Bush passed the Talent Amendment, which not only caps annual interest rates on payday loans to military families at 36 percent, but also bans the practice of check holding and binding mandatory arbitration. The Washington Legislature failed to extend these protections to all working families in our state.

I believe the people of Washington deserve more. The values that allow for continued interest rates like 391 percent don’t match the values of most of the people in our state. It is a shame the Legislature failed to make any serious attempt to rein in this use. We will continue the fight, and we hope you will join us.

Aiko Schaefer is director of the State-wide Poverty Action Network (www.poorwork.org). Poverty Action has thousands of members across the state working together to ensure everyone is able to meet basic needs and have the opportunity to prosper. They are a coalition of members of Communities Against Payday Predators (www.noloansharks.org).

The controversy became a lightning rod for anger over New Times corporate ownership of the Seattle Weekly and what that means for local journalism. The Weekly has once knew would have never made this mistake. For me, this simply highlights the importance of supporting homegrown alternative media.

Real Change’s community-based journalism, effective organizing, and advocacy for the poor, homeless, and vulnerable have built a deep well of respect and support for our work in this town. And we’re only getting better!
Real Change  

April 18 - 24, 2007

**Just Heard...**

**Sonic is out**

Pro basketball in the Seattle area will soon be a thing of the past, say owners of the Sonics and Storm after the State Legislature let drop their bid for a new, taxpayer-financed $500 million arena.

In a statement released Monday, team co-owner Clay Bennett thanked their bill’s chief sponsors, Rep. Eric Pettigrew and Sen. Margarita Pren- tice. Both Democrats represent parts of Renton, where the arena would have been built. The owners “remain willing and available” to considering other public funding ideas before the Legislature adjourns, on or before April 23. “We are also receptive to analyzing any private financing mechanisms that are brought to our attention,” he said in a statement. “But at this time we have no other concepts on the table.”

P-I is in

Another local institution owned by mega-rich out-of-towners is safe, for now: the Seattle Post-Intelligencer will continue publication under the terms of its Joint Operating Agreement with the Times, under which the Times runs the printing, advertising, and circulation departments for the P-I.

Owners concluded their talks on Sunday, April 15. In return for $25 million from Hearst, the Times has agreed to not release any notices of financial loss, which push each party closer to dissolving their joint operating agreement, until 2026. And the Times will pay Hearst $49 million so Hearst relinquishes its claim on nearly one-third of the profits should the P-I be folded.

Planning is on

The city’s Office of Emergency Management is holding a series of meetings to help residents plan, on an individual and communal basis, for disasters.

The city is offering Seattle Neighborhoods Actively Prepare to instruct people in how to put together their own emergency planning kits, draw up a response plan, and organize with their neighbors to respond in concert.

The meetings begin April 19 and run through June 16 at six different community centers. For more information, see www.seattle.gov/emergency.

—Adam Hyla

**Change Agent**

**Octogenarian Shirley Morrison’s commitment to nonviolence led to an arrest at Bangor Naval Station.**

Shirley Morrison remembers visiting an exhibit on the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and being “appalled by the destruction.”

That moment charged a lifetime of passionate opposition to nuclear escalation. The first year she protested at the U.S. Naval Base in Bangor, Washington, home to one of the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons in the United States was 1979. Morrison was not ready to participate that day, but she helped other activists climb the fence into the base.

Now in her 80s, Morrison has been arrested nine times and was recently found guilty of disorderly conduct for stopping traffic outside the base at Bangor. After spending a night in prison, she chose to do 64 hours of community service rather than face a $500 fine.

What resonates most for Morrison in her commitment to nonviolent resistance is the dream of creating a nuclear-free world for her great-grandchildren and the desire to call attention to the nuclear threat in our own Pacific Northwest backyard.

—Rachel Rubinstein

**Seattle steps up**

“*It’s probably the biggest challenge we will face in our lifetimes,*” said Sierra Club National Campaign Director Debbie Sease in her keynote introductory speech at last Saturday’s Step It Up march to push Congress to cut greenhouse emissions 80 percent by 2050. Seattle’s demonstration was one of 1,400 nationwide.

Nearly 2,000 people marched in the rain from Pioneer Square north to Myrtle Edwards Park, where they were welcomed by sunshine and a “Solutions Festival” bright with carbon-cutting ideas, raffles for discount solar-panelling, and speeches from proponents of clean-green policy, including Seattle U.S. Rep. Jay Inslee, Mayor Greg Nickels, and MLK Jr. County Executive Ron Sims.

Inslee, whose New Apollo Energy Act (House Bill 2828) equates stopping global warming with the moon landing, said it is “the destiny of Washington and America” to pioneer and supply green technology to the world. H.B. 2828 would meet the marchers’ greenhouse-gas reduction goals.

Nickels reported that 452 mayors around the country have joined his Kyoto meet-or-beat Climate Protection Agreement. Those mayors’ cities account for over 20 percent of the U.S. population.

Sims has commissioned the country’s Global Warming Action Plan to cut the emissions 80 percent by 2050.

Inslee applauded the marchers, saying that “good things happen when people wear out their shoes.”

—Chris Miller

**Four hundred adults and children proceeded through downtown Seattle Thursday, April 12, to highlight the effects of U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement raids and deportations on the families of undocumented workers. Speakers called for immigration reform that protects workers, ensures due process, and offers workers a chance for citizenship.**

—Rachel Rubinstein


**Real Change**

April 18 - 24, 2007
Ballard Traces the High Water Mark of Climate Change

Community effort part of a national day to “step up” action against warming

By ANGIE JONES, Contributing Writer

Sustainable Ballard provided a vivid look at the impact of rising sea levels on Seattle at Golden Gardens Park on April 14, the National Day of Climate Action.

About 30 people stood at the current high tide line on Shilshole beach with bamboo poles marked with ribbon at two, five, and 23 feet, indicating the rising water line global warming has already and could continue to produce over the next 50 to 100 years — if present trends persist.

“It’s so much more than the water,” said participant Deborah Barnes. “We’re here to get focused on what our government needs to do.”

This event was one of a multitude to take place at more than 11,400 iconic locations in all 50 states, in efforts to persuade Congress to pass laws to help reduce greenhouse gases 80 percent by 2050, beginning a new movement for the 21st century.

Event organizer Andrea Faste, who works with environmental group Sustainable Ballard and in cooperation with national group Step It Up, launched the project because she’s “tired of marching and rallying” and wanted to do something unique to register opposition to climate change, while promoting community-based solutions.

“I think it’s great because it’s a local thing,” said Ballard resident Anne Siems as she watched her young daughter hand out fliers to passing observers. “Local action has a big impact; it’s personal and at the human level.”

Climate change in Puget Sound may be more gradual than in other parts of the world. In Alaska, natives are relocating villages as the tundra under them thaws; the low-lying South Pacific nation of Vanuatu is being evacuated; and in Bangladesh and the Marshall Islands, an inch’s rise (thought to be caused by higher sea temperatures, since water expands as it warms) has displaced thousands due to coastal farms becoming too flood-prone and acidic from the saltwater.

“It’s going to be a long battle,” said Faste, noting the recklessly slow pace of government action in conjunction with what she refers to as the “fast cars and whiskey mentality” of Americans. “You can always have better and more of it,” she said, “but now we have to choose.”

In Alaska, natives are relocating villages as the tundra under them thaws; the low-lying South Pacific nation of Vanuatu is being evacuated.

Thanks to Al Gore’s campaign against global warming and to climate scientists and activists across the country, the impact of human activity on the environment is becoming common knowledge.

The demonstration ended with a discussion of practical alternatives such as biking and carpooling, biodiesel in cars and furnaces, buying locally grown food, and redoubling efforts at recycling. If implemented in everyday life, efforts like these could significantly cut down on the carbon emissions that are proven to make massive changes in global atmospheric chemistry.

Events continued throughout the day as close to 1,000 people marched, chanting and carrying signs, from Occidental Park downtown to Myrtle Edwards Park, where a rally and solutions fair ensued, featuring speeches by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, County Executive Ron Sims, U.S. Rep. Jay Inslee (D - Bainbridge Island), and other public officials.

“People are recognizing that a collective will can make a difference,” said Faste, “and we are now insisting.”

Andrea Faste and Vic Opperman dramatize the effects of climate change on the Puget Sound shoreline Saturday, April 14, at Ballard’s Golden Gardens Park. They led about 30 people in holding ribbons at the level of the future water line should global warming continue unabated over the next century. Photo by Elliot Stoller.
Local NAACP calls attention to police racial profiling

**Arrests expose system of “separate justice,” say Black leaders**

By CYDNEY GILLIS, Staff Reporter

Rajnii Eddins is glad he got arrested for asking a police officer a question. Maybe now, the poet and teacher says, the Seattle Police Department will be forced to change how it treats African Americans.

On the afternoon of April 5, while walking to Rainier Beach High School, where he is currently directing a student play about the evils of smoking, Eddins saw a female student being handcuffed and put in a squad car. Concerned that the girl’s parents be notified, Eddins says he approached three officers slowly and calmly, told them he works at the high school, and asked what the girl was being charged with.

The next thing he knew, the soft-spoken 26-year-old who grew up in Rainier Valley was being handcuffed and arrested on a charge of obstructing an officer — one of three racially biased arrests that the NAACP says police have made in the past two months alone.

In a press conference called April 16 at City Hall, Eddins, Michael Brooks, and Anjonet Hill — none of whom had ever been arrested before — stood with Seattle-King County NAACP chief James Bible, who told their stories and demanded that police stop the arrests and abuse.

On Feb. 5, 62-year-old Michael Brooks was detained as he was walking past a park on Capitol Hill where an attempted rape had just occurred (“72 Hours: Held three days for a crime he claims he didn’t commit, a man seeks answers,” RC March 21). On Feb. 18, during Pioneer Square’s Mardi Gras celebration, Anjonet Hill says she had just left a club when a fight broke out in the street.

“All of a sudden I hit the ground from a sock to the back of my head,” the 23-year-old Tukwila mother says. An officer had knocked her to the curb to handcuff her, she says, dislocating her jaw in the process.

“We have a problem in Seattle,” Bible told reporters. “The problem is police misconduct. The problem is racial profiling. The problem is a separate system of justice for African-Americans and people of color.”

Department slighted citizens’ input

**Audit Faults Parks Process**

By CYDNEY GILLIS, Staff Reporter

It took a year, but people who’ve been fighting the Parks Departments over its public process are finally feeling vindicated, though not quite satisfied.

A report released last week from the City Auditor on how Parks solicits public input on major renovations cited a number of problems in one project that was chosen for a case study — the controversy over installing artificial turf at Ballard’s Loyal Heights Playfield.

The auditor found that Parks followed its stated public input policy, but took certain steps, the report says, “that adversely affected the public involvement process at Loyal Heights.” Among them, Parks staff told members of the project’s citizen advisory team that they could not question putting in artificial turf, failed to finish or present the team’s report to the Board of Parks Commissioners before it voted on the project, and did not properly manage contentious meetings.

After the Park Board voted to move forward with the artificial turf, the report also states that former Parks Superintendent Ken Bounds, who retired earlier this year, created a special reconsideration period that few members of the community knew about.

Teachers and neighbors objected to artificial turf, saying it would clog the field with sports games and cut passive uses of the park. Soccer and other sports league members countered that Seattle rain makes grass fields unusable most of the year.

The issue was one of a number of controversies the Parks Department faced last year, two of which led to lawsuits over plans at Gas Works and Occidental parks.

In the wake of the controversies, David Della, chair of the Seattle City Council’s Parks Committee, requested the audit. In Phase 1, the auditor looked at Parks’ general public involvement practices, issuing a report last fall that called for 16 action steps such as providing histories of every project, hiring professional facilitators for meetings, and taking out newspaper ads to inform the public of project meetings.

Parks spokeswoman Dewey Potter says many of the steps have already been taken. But she says the issue at Loyal Heights — which is currently in the process of having its artificial turf installed — was largely one of an error in wording in the Pro-Parks Levy measure that funded the project and two others like it.

Instead of specifying artificial turf, Potter says, the Pro-Parks Levy merely stipulated “ballfield improvements.”

“It’s an explanation that worries Loyal Heights resident Pat Devine. She and her partner, Jim Anderson, fought the artificial turf and say Parks still doesn’t see anything wrong in its past actions.

“It really made me feel that our work was a positive thing,” Anderson says of the audit’s conclusion. But, “This shouldn’t be the end of this. It should be the beginning of a new era of creating a responsive Parks Departments and a responsive Parks Board.”

**“We have a problem in Seattle. ...The problem is a separate system of justice for African-Americans and people of color.”**

— James Bible, Seattle/King County NAACP chief

It’s a longstanding problem, Bible said, that requires changes at SPD, including turning the Office of Professional Accountability, an internal police unit that investigates and reports on citizen complaints, into a unit overseen by citizens — something leaders of the Black community have demanded for years.

An SPD spokesperson declined to comment on the allegations of racial bias. But, after the press conference, the department issued a statement pointing out that the findings of its complaint office were reviewed by an independent civilian auditor and a citizen board.

In response to inquiries about Eddins, media officer Debra Brown says that race was not a factor in his arrest. The officers had just broken up a fight involving 10 to 15 juveniles at the Lake Washington Apartments, a complex, she says, that’s known for problems with increasing violence. The girl who was arrested, she says, had been taunting the officers, who ran a check on her and found she had a warrant.

Bible and K.L. Shannon of the Racial Disparity Project say the police often describe a neighborhood as violent in order to justify their actions. But, with Eddins, they say, it won’t wash: He is a devoted youth leader known in part for serving as a big brother to the 54 foster children his mother helped raise over the years.

At his arraignment last week, “There had to be over 60 people there to support him,” Shannon says of the packed courtroom. “That alone is a message being sent to the city that the police made a serious mistake — one that could cost Eddins his career. If the record of the arrest isn’t expunged, as the NAACP is calling for, Bible says, schools won’t hire him in the future.”

Shannon says she and the NAACP are currently working to collect other stories of racially motivated arrests to document the pattern. While going to jail was “pretty ridiculous,” Eddins says, he believes the incident will serve a higher purpose.

“It’s a good opportunity,” he says. “Since I have no record and no prior arrest, it exposes in a clear and decisive manner the racism of the Seattle Police Department and the need for discourse and dialog and some form of reconciliation between community members and the Seattle Police Department.”

egillis@realchangenews.org
Janet Clark says that selling *Real Change* has connected her with people. “It’s starting to make me feel part of a community again.”

Janet Clark is never alone when she sells *Real Change* in front of Ken’s Market on Greenwood Ave.

Sitting quietly beside her in a large, collapsible crate is Kate, an 8-year-old Rottweiler/Australian Cattle Dog mix.

“She’s my best friend,” Clark says. The two encamp together in “a good spot where no one knows where we’re at,” says Clark. “We’ve got birds and beavers and she [Kate] chases the beavers every night. She goes nuts.”

Clark, an Idaho native, has been selling *Real Change* since last June. She found out about the paper while living in transitional housing. It’s been a positive move that she says has helped her survive.

“City officials didn’t consider the environmental impact of removing stone pavers at Occidental Park, according to an April 16 ruling in King County Superior Court. File photo.”

City officials didn’t consider the environmental impact of removing stone pavers at Occidental Park, according to an April 16 ruling in King County Superior Court.

In June of 2005, a group of Pioneer Square residents and business owners led by Bif Brigman and Elle Tracy sued the Parks Department to stop the remodel, saying that the destruction of 17 trees and the park’s European-style pergola because it did not have a structure approved at the time to go in its place — a requirement under laws that govern the Pioneer Square Historic District.

In June of 2005, a group of Pioneer Square residents and business owners led by Bif Brigman and Elle Tracy sued the Parks Department to stop the remodel, saying that the destruction of 17 trees and the park’s European-style design were never part of a neighborhood plan that they helped draw up.

Before the demolition, the group presented the City Council with a petition of 1,400 people opposed to the Parks Department remodel, then argued the matter before a city hearing examiner, who ruled against them.

Judge Erlick’s ruling, however, states that the hearing examiner overstepped her bounds. The Pioneer Square Preservation Board had final say over the project, but at the time it voted approval in May 2005, the judge ruled, the city had not presented the board with an environmental checklist required by law. The city later issued a Declaration of Non-Significance that the board never saw, preventing any public input on the environmental issues.

“No private developer would get away with what the city did,” Tracy says. Though 17 of the London Plane trees are gone, “Saving the park’s remaining 40-year-old trees is what we’re fighting for now.” —Cydney Gillis

**Pioneer Square park wins**

**Washington Women in Trades**

**Could this be YOU?**

*Friday, April 27, 2007*  
10am - 4pm

*at Seattle Center’s Fisher Pavilion*

Learn about physically challenging, well paying careers in non-traditional trades as electricians, line workers, sprinkler fitters, carpenters and MORE!
Sherman Alexie Thinks for Himself and Angers White Liberals. So what else is new?

With *Flight*, the author of *Indian Killer* lets sail his first novel in more than a decade.

Interview by TIMOTHY HARRIS, Staff Writer

Over the past two decades, Sherman Alexie has established himself as a major literary voice through his poetry, novels and short stories, and movies. This week, Alexie begins a new book tour to launch *Flight* (Black Cat / Grove Atlantic, $13), his first novel since 1996’s *Indian Killer*. *Flight’s* anti-hero is a 16-year-old foster kid named Zits, who, like Billy Pilgrim of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, has come unmoored in time and space.

Alexie dropped in on us at Real Change to discuss his new book, class and race in America, and the trouble with white liberals.

Kurt Vonnegut?

Died today! I woke up this morning and walked downstairs, and my wife looked at me and had this look on her face; and I was scared 'cuz I’m a reservation Native American and your wife gets that face and you're like, “Oh shit, my brother, my sister, my mother, who? My cousin died?” And she says Kurt Vonnegut died, which was just devastating.

Yeah, well, he was a big influence on all writers of our generation, and clearly an influence for you…

Yeah, the direct influence on this book in particular. But, also on my whole career. The notion of being funny in the most extreme of circumstances. Being funny about Nazis, being funny about the bombing, being funny about genocide. The notion that you could be hilarious and at the same time approach the books with a clear moral vision.

You’ve talked a lot about how in a post-9/11 world, you are making a part of all those classes. I’m working on a family memoir, and this kind of stuff is a big part of the discussion of how different I am than my father and my grandfather. How different my children are from me. I was playing with my oldest son, and he wanted to play “room service.” (Laughter) They know they’re Indian. They are not assimilated to that degree, but it’s so less important to them. I can’t see us as an oppressed group anymore. I can’t. Not when we have this hard fought, and hard won, special status. We are sovereign nations, and we want to be treated as such, and we have to start acting as such.

You’re one of those exceptions to the rule that people point to. It’s “Look at Sherman. He was on the reservation, and now he’s a successful professional and therefore anybody can do it.”

You have to talk about it in a number of ways. One of the greatesses of the United States is that in reality, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of people have broken through class barriers, so it is possible.

“I agree with Bill O’Reilly! Omigod! What’s wrong with me?”

Sherman Alexie on the end of tribalism and why white liberals need to get over it.

“...and we have to start talking about race. We have to stop talking about race. We have to stop. That is not to say racism isn’t and will not be a problem, but the fact is that our rhetoric alienates the people whose minds we need to change. We make it about class, we automatically bring in this huge group of people who we’ve alienated: poor and working class white folks. And we need them, and they need us.

You know who it really gets that face and you’re like, “Oh shit, my brother, my sister, my mother, who? My cousin died?” And she says Kurt Vonnegut died, which was just devastating.

Yeah, he was a big influence on all writers of our generation, and clearly an influence for you…

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You have to talk about it in a number of ways. One of the greatesses of the United States is that in reality, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of people have broken through class barriers, so it is possible.

But then you look at the actual data, and class mobility has gone down.

Yeah. The United States is a meritocracy for the wildly talented. But the thing is, once you start moving out of that group, that’s when it becomes a huge issue, because that’s where money and class really plays a part. I teach college classes. Trust me. There are all sorts of upper class and middle class mediocrities doing really well in college. Who get in there only because of their privileges. So, the issue is, how do we help? For me it comes down again to class-based affirmative action, not race-based. You can’t believe in class-based affirmative action?

Rush Limbaugh?

Bill O’Reilly. So I agree with Bill O’Reilly! Omigod! What’s wrong with me? For me the argument becomes autobiographical. We are in the top 5 to 10 percent of income in the United States. I’m in the upper tax bracket in the United States. If there is anybody out there who thinks my children will have more problems getting into college than the children of a Boeing swing-shift worker, they’re idiots and they’re racists. A white farm town kid, a white kid from the Selkirk or Republic, a...
Deaf

As I started to write this poem I thought
Maybe I should change the TV station in my psyche
This program is too violent.
Someone wanted to make a movie about me
And decided to create the action first.
I remember standing in East St. Louis
In the middle of a Saturday night
After hitchhiking,
Freshly graduated from high school
Across the USA
And a Black man on a bicycle
Accosted me
Gave me filth about my sister
And finally let me go with the words, “you suck.”
I remember a gang of white race rioters
Seeing me as a traitor to my race
When I was scarcely a child
Because of my black arm band
Throwing me into a store window
Punching me to my back
Stomping on my face
And calling me “queerbait.”
I remember falling to the ground in seizures
As police circled me
Mocking me after I reported death threats
Leering at me after the rape of my deaf girlfriend.

The fact that we are deaf has no race.
We are not white people. We are not Black people.
We are deaf people.
Just things in the way of everything.
I remember being very cold and homeless.

We have been paid back many times
For the crime of being deaf,
Paid in rapes and torture and hatred
And the jeers of people who
Get along much better without us.
People who stitch their lies about us on our faces
Give us the masks attached to our skin
Calling our crucible their love for us,
Calling the twisted deceit of smiling in the wreckage.
Their love for us.

It’s a violent country.
The vulnerable can’t ask for anything
And don’t have anywhere to turn.
We can’t look back without being accused
Or plotting a vendetta.

We just have to move forward
Smile at our imprisoners
With our heads down and pretend not to notice
That nobody who notices us means us well
And that nobody notices us.

I do not live to grind an axe about being deaf.
I do not want to be deaf.
I am not sorry for the deafness.
I can accept being deaf.
I cannot stand being deaf.
I cannot stand not hearing the remarks.
I can tolerate the words
But the tenor traumatizes me.

Always we are to blame,
For not being to blame.
We are shunned
But we are not being shunned.
We are ignored
But we are not being ignored.

What more can we want
But everything we need
Just to get by.
Just to move from invisible place
To invisible place.

I cannot hear
Therefore I am invisible.

—Mac Crary

Jonathan Raban’s Surveillance Society

Review by JOE MARTIN, Contributing Writer

As police circled me and calling me “queerbait.”
Stomping on my face
Punching me to my back
Throwing me into a store window
Because of my black arm band
When I was scarcely a child
Seeing me as a traitor to my race
And finally let me go with the words, “you gave me filth about my sister
And a Black man on a bicycle
Across the USA
Freshly graduated from high school
After hitchhiking,
And decided to create the action first.
Someone wanted to make a movie about me
This program is too violent.
Maybe I should change the TV station in my psyche.
Noticing.

Jonathan Raban, Pantheon, January 2007, Hardcover, 272 pages, $24

Earlier this month in Taunton, Mass., the school board announced that it would be installing a new electronic device in school cafeterias. This device would scan fingerprints of students and tabulate their purchase. Some parents along with the ACLU are voicing discomfort.

Surveillance and pervasive enforcers nurture an order in which genuine security is suspended by suspicion and fear. Profuse surveillance and pervasive enforcers nurture an order in which genuine security is supplanted by suspicion and fear. Citizens alarmed by burgeoning threats to our liberty will find Raban’s tale an intriguing as well as entertaining reflection on that exigent topic.
I don't know anything. But, like Socrates, I stay ahead of the crowd by knowing that I don't know. Just last Saturday, as I was at the vendor desk, a vendor asked me if I was in a good mood. I didn't know! But I KNEW that I didn't know, so I could ASK. I also knew that Anita’s “High Maintenance Babe” Freeman was somewhere within earshot, doodling on some computer. So I shouted, “HEY ANITJA! AM I IN A GOOD MOOD?” FRANKLIN WANTS TO KNOW!” She answered back directly to Franklin. “His mood is pretty good today. He's not horrid.”

I mean, really, how can I know if I'm in a good mood or not? I don't have to suffer from it. You might as well ask me if I'm tolerable to look at. What, do people think I stare at mirrors all day? I know my hands aren't a freak show.

Sometimes not knowing a thing is smarter than knowing it. One of my pet peeves is aroused by people who know that “racism is about power,” and conclude that “Black Americans can't be racist.”

First of all, you can’t even tell how racist you are by looking in a mirror, because the face in the mirror is you looking at you. You need to see how you relate to others.

First and a half, note I said “how” racist, not “if.” You ARE, and the questions are only: In what way? To what extent?

Secondly. The statement “racism is about power” is precisely the kind of meaningless, vacuous, rotting-from-the-head-down-and-out-its-ass bullshit that makes me wonder if the people in this country who want to be educated don’t want to bother being there when it happens. Of course racism is about power. Anything that isn’t static is about power. Verbs are about power. Giving, talking, walking, talking, and singing are about power. Even standing is about power. Stand up for what's right!

Third of all, for the conclusion to be valid, the reasoner is required to accept the unstated premise that Black Americans can have no power. None. What?

Think about it. If Black Americans have any power (and they do), 'cause I've seen them have some when they didn't know I was looking), then they are able to have that much racism. OK, maybe they can't be as racist as white Americans, what with all that humongous power white Americans have, seeing as how white Americans own Disneyland, Idaho, South Dakota, and most of the Midwest, but Black Americans can at least be a tiny bit racist with the little bit of power they have.

A good, smart, starting answer to the question, “How much is that tiny bit of racism?” might be, “I don't know.” Such an answer might demonstrate the readiness to begin to know.

Another smart time to not know something is when you're faced with events beyond all human comprehension. I'm writing this the morning of April 16. Yesterday was not only Fox Day but Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Day. Originally it was meant to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began April 19th, 1943, speaking of oft-unspoken power. It's a good thing, I am sure, to remember the Holocaust, but not a good thing to comprehend.

My promise to one and all: If anyone can convince me that he truly and completely comprehends the Holocaust, I will worship him as a stupid god. I will carry him around on my shoulders and use his aura to heal the sick and the lame.

No, I'm not in a horrid mood, even though Kurt Vonnegut died last week, and losing a smart one pissed me off.

“I'm writing this the morning of April 16. Yesterday was not only Fox Day but Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Day. Originally it was meant to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began April 19th, 1943, speaking of oft-unspoken power. It's a good thing, I am sure, to remember the Holocaust, but not a good thing to comprehend.”
Odysseus
in a Land of Toaster Ovens

So many crumbs, so little time,
I feel the red glow of the filaments
in my own chest
like English muffins in apprenticeship
Warm and Warmer.
They have suckled a generation
of hybrids
those who have never known the
exasperation of a pop-up toaster.
In my memory bank, long ago,
I remember when the spring recoiled
in some far-off mechanical dream
but now
with these toaster ovens, there is
no pushing down, only the laying on
of butter and jam as the racks warm
those who sun themselves on grills.
How I miss
the long accruing toaster with its
vertical reach
instead, a world of the horizontal
has overtaken us.
We can only stack them high with
little thought. O forgive us!

—Michael Magee
white kid from Blaine, a white kid from Anacortes or Aberdeen...

Yeah, in terms of opportunity, class trumps race.

Yeah, you know, and class-based [affirmative action] would cover all those victims of race as well. And then we eliminate the discussion of race as the primary tactic. I mean, I paraphrase MLK Jr. “I measure people's chances not by the contents of their characters but by the contents of their refrigerators.” How much food is in the fucking house? That determines it.

“I found the whole foster kid narrative in Flight very moving, and I’m wondering where your experience in this is. How is this an issue that you are close to? My parents were a foster family on the rez. During my first 18 years on the rez. During my first 18 years on the rez. The big thing I’ve been appalled by is the pessimism of white liberals, and how different their moral system, about violence and guns, is from the people they are trying to support. And I get in trouble for it.

“Because certain more violent members of AIM and I share the same ethnicity, I automatically, reflexively, assumed that we shared the same moral system. And we don’t.”

I reflexively supported Leonard Peltier until very recently. I am fully aware of what the FBI is capable of in this country, and has always been capable of in this country. But then I actually looked at what happened that day on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Whatever happened, there was a gunfight. The FBI agents were mortally wounded, defenseless, and one, two or three—depending on the stories—people walked down the hill 100 yards, went around the cars, stood over the FBI agents, and shot them in the face. By any definition of the term, that is a crime.

It’s an execution.

Because certain more violent members of AIM and I share the same ethnic-identity, I automatically, reflexively, assumed that we shared the same moral system. And we didn’t. I have an entirely different moral system than Leonard Peltier. Russell Means. Dennis Banks. I would say almost all of the white liberals who support the Free Leonard Peltier thing, if they really examined it, would realize how different their moral system, about violence and guns, is from the people they are trying to support. And I get in trouble for it.

I’ll bet you do. I’ve had people yell out, “Fuck you, Sherman! Read your readings and performances, which is fun.”

Is there anything in particular that you’ve been either inspired or appalled by?

The big thing I’ve been appalled by is the pessimism of white liberals, and I constantly remind them that they are the most privileged, educated, powerful group of human beings that have ever existed.

Pessimism really is a luxury we can’t afford.

Their privilege makes them stupid. So I guess I’m always appalled by the stupidity of the privileged.

There is a kind of fundamental optimism that often comes through in your work. Why do you think it is that you are built that way?

Part of it has to do with the combination of Christian and native faith. Jesus and my grandma. So, it’s that partnership. Every day I see dozens of amazing moments. Dozens of amazing interactions. Last night, I was shopping. I’m an insomniac, so I went grocery shopping late. I was in a 24-hour store. There was this old Black guy. I didn’t see him and he didn’t see me, and we both reached for the same loaf of French bread. We laughed. And he has this raspy voice (imitates), “I love this French bread, cuz even when I make just a halva sandwich it makes me feel special.” So, first, just the luxury of being in a grocery store at 2 in the morning, I never discount that, and the beautiful interaction with a stranger over a loaf of French bread, how could you not have hope for humanity?

Contact Tim Harris: rhange@spokaneways.net

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CALL TO ACTION
Shopping center developers must be accountable

Issue: Negotiations between community members and developers for the shopping center planned for the Goodwill site at Rainier and Dearborn failed to create enough benefits to the community to make up for the huge impact on local neighbors, shop owners, traffic, and more. The Dearborn Street Coalition for a Livable Neighborhood is taking on these developers and demanding more accountability and benefits for the entire community.

Background: This development will be the largest retail center between Southcenter and Northgate and will be two-thirds the size of Northgate Mall. Over 80 percent of the retail space will be for big box stores and national chains. The center will have 2,300 parking spaces and is expected to double traffic on Rainier Avenue. After a city-funded mediator worked with community members and developers, a few of the community’s requests were addressed — the developer agreed to make more of the housing units at the project affordable, but only half of those 200 units are reserved for very low-income seniors, the other half can be affordable for people making less than median income. That’s about $52,000 for a single person and $74,000 for a family of four. The developer also offered a modest amount to subsidize rents for a few Little Saigon neighborhood businesses, reducing rent from an expected $52 per square foot to $28. Currently, rents are about $15 per square foot.

Last year, we started the job of ensuring that Seattle’s exploding growth benefits everyone, not just wealthy developers, by increasing the affordable housing bonus with the Downtown for All campaign. Maintain-
Friday 4/20 - Sunday 4/22
The Seattle Poetry Festival is three full days of readings, performances, and workshops with Mary Jo Bang, Joshua Beckman, Heather McHugh, and more. Tickets $12 advance, $15 door. 11 a.m., Richard Hugo House, 1634 11th Ave.

Sunday 4/22
Feed Your Mind hosts a reading and dis- cussion of Odin’s Horse, by Robert Koon. Nordic mythology’s story of Odin, who was suspended between heaven and hell, are used as a background for the story of Ar man, a struggling writer. When Arman meets a tree-sitter in the forest with an unwavering commitment, his views of trade-offs and good fortune alter. Suggested donation $5.
2 p.m., Seattle University, Pigott Auditorium, 901 12th Ave.

Monday 4/23
University of Washington Professor John Flecker heeds the effects of climate change on birds and other wildlife in his lecture Unleashing the Power of Audubon: Fighting Global Warming. 6:30 p.m., REI, 222 Yale Ave. N. RSVP: cwseed@audubon.org.

As the crisis in Darfur enters its fifth year, the Sudanese government continues to depend on foreign investment to fund its genocidal campaign, Ruth Messinger, leader of American Jewish World Service, will share her struggles and successes promoting her grassroots campaign that encourages divestment as well as alerting elected officials that the violence and displacement must stop. 7 p.m., Temple De Hirsch Sinai, 1511 E Pike.

Wednesday 4/25
Ellen Bravo shares inspiring stories from her new book, Taking on the Big Boys. She has fought on the front lines for women’s rights in the workplace, testified before Congress, de bated CEOs, and stood with clerical workers during union drives. She believes feminism is good for everyone: men, women, families, and the nation. 5:30 p.m., Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St.

Two Seattle-based fiction authors, Bharti Kirchner and Indu Sundaresan, have chosen distinct avenues in writing about their home country. Kirchner’s novels include Shiva Danc ing and Passions. Concentrating on historical Mughal India, Sundaresan penned The Feast of Roses and The Splendor of Silence. Hosted by University of Washington Professor Kellie Holzer, who will interview these women in a program entitled “Writing India in the Pacific Northwest,” 7 p.m., Seattle Public Library, Central Branch, Microsoft Auditorium, 1000 Fourth Ave.

Thursday 4/26
An African-American businessman and a young immigrant fall in love, only to encounter shock and outrage from their families in the film Mississippi Masala. After the showing, a representative from Tasveer, a nonprofit group that promotes South Asian cinema, will lead a discussion on racism and dating today. 7 p.m., Seattle Public Library, Capitol Hill Branch, 425 Harvard Ave. E.

Friday 4/27
In July 2003, Christopher Swain became the first person to swim the entire length of the Columbia River. In the course of his journey, he became a witness to the polluted and disrupted ecosystems along the river’s course. Source to Sea is a modern history of the riv ers of the West with footage of Swain’s great swim, along with interviews of tribal members, ﬁshers, and agency representatives. 7 p.m., Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Pl. Info: www.source2sea.org.

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For Jimmy in His Hard Time
You will be happy, free and light. Your sweetheart will meet you at the gate in a yellow Cadillac: she’ll slide over and you’ll take the wheel. You’ll drive down the road. The car will be a real honey and it’s always summer there.

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Elizabeth Romero

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